

19th International  
Philosophy Colloquium Evian  
July 7-13, 2013

Disagreement  
Uneinigkeit  
Désaccord

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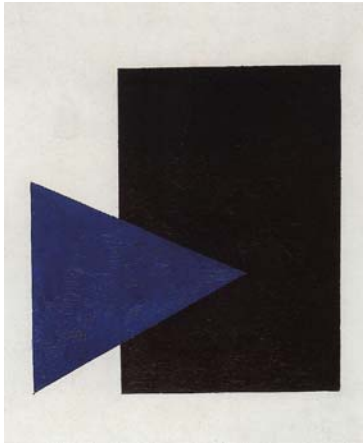
TOPIC

Is there disagreement? That is, do we really disagree? From the standpoint of everyday life, the answer seems to be clear. Disagreements among us are legion: about scientific, political, and social questions, about questions of right conduct and religion, about questions concerning subjective preferences and aesthetic taste (to mention only a few examples). From the standpoint of rationality, however, it is not so clear how these disagreements should be assessed. Shouldn't the forceless force of the better argument carry the day in almost all cases of disagreement? Isn't it possible in principle to determine which view is the better one among rival views? Aren't disagreements better seen, therefore, as intermediate stages on the way toward a more comprehensive agreement – at least among all those who conduct themselves rationally? If not, can a disagreement itself be rational, even when two interlocutors share the same epistemic presuppositions and the same relevant information? Many philosophers hold the view that this is not possible. To the extent that a substantial disagreement in certain spheres should turn out to be irresolvable, according to this view, we have to refrain from judging. This position can draw support (among others) from Kant's reflections, for in his critique of metaphysics he pleads ultimately for abstaining from judgments regarding classical questions of metaphysics (about which there always remains disagreement) and holds otherwise that the remaining conflicts are resolvable in principle.

This understanding of rationality as free of conflict or capable of transcending conflicts still remains influential to our day. Hegel, however, opposes this understanding by conceiving conflict essentially as the driving force of rationality. But this Hegelian understanding of reason has in turn been criticized – by Nietzsche and Adorno among others – as still perpetuating a philosophy of reconciliation, so that it remains questionable whether Hegel has provided us with a satisfactory account of the compatibility of rationality and disagreement. Is "reasonable disagreement" (Rawls) an enduring feature of our practices and reaches deeper than we generally assume? What is the theoretical and practical relevance of persistent disagreement? Does the latter lead to the acceptance of relativism, skepticism, or pluralism?

This question about the significance of disagreements plays an important role in many areas of philosophy. It is currently discussed in epistemology (Christensen, Freitag, Kornblith) and in the philosophy of mind and language, broadly construed, e.g., in the hermeneutical question about the status of conflict in the correct interpretation of linguistic meaning (Lyotard, Margolis, Wellmer). Equally, in the philosophy of art (Carroll, Menke, Rancière), it is important to clarify what significance disagreements have regarding aesthetic judgments and the ascription of aesthetic properties. In practical philosophy, disagreement is construed as either a problem for or a structural feature of morality and politics. Whereas political liberalism accepts disagreement and sees it as constrained by reasonable norms (Rawls, Habermas), "radical" or "agonistic" theories go further by conceiving disagreement as something that does not endanger politics and democracy, but rather goes "all the way down" and is the essence and condition of possibility of democracy (Arendt, Rancière, Mouffe/Laclau). Some theorists in moral philosophy (de Beauvoir, Williams, Lukes) also conceive disagreement as an essential feature of moral practice. Last but not least, disagreements are significant in philosophy as a whole: Philosophy has been characterized by conflicts among different schools and positions. Indeed, there is little reason to hope (assuming that this would be a hope) that this conflict can be overcome.

The 19th International Philosophy Colloquium Evian invites philosophers to the shores of Lake Geneva to discuss the nature and relevance of disagreement with regard to different areas of philosophy, human practices, and the current state of philosophy in general. It welcomes the controversies and tensions that can result from examining the concept of disagreement from a wide range of philosophical perspectives. We appeal to all philosophers who are interested in participating in intensive discussions about this topic in a way that transcends the narrow boundaries of different philosophical movements or schools of thought. These discussions at the Colloquium are conceived as a place where the supposed divide between "continental" and "analytic" philosophy is overcome, or at least as a site where the differences between these philosophical traditions can be rendered productive. **Passive comprehension of all three languages of the colloquium, namely French, German, and English, is a prerequisite for all applicants.**



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## INVITATION

The International Philosophy Colloquia Evian provide a locus for enjoying intense philosophical discussion and philosophical company. They follow the goal to create an ongoing, expanding common debate that spans the whole week. To this end the number of participants is restricted to approximately 25.

The Colloquia are internationally orientated. Thematically, they put a stress on (contemporary) French philosophy in particular and continental philosophy in general, which are discussed in the contexts of German as well as English-language philosophy. Given this orientation, the International Philosophy Colloquia Evian are meant to be a place where the divide between continental and analytic philosophy has been overcome.

Participants in the Colloquium may give talks and/or take part in the discussion without contributing work of their own in the strict sense. Talks may be presented in German, English or French and are limited to 25-30 minutes. The scheduling of sessions will depend on the talks and presentations that are selected. There are no prearranged sections. The languages of the Colloquium are German, English and French. In discussions, participants are encouraged to speak whatever of the three language they feel most at home in all the time, regardless of the language of the talk that is being discussed.

Before applying to participate, please note the following requirements:

- **A passive understanding of all three languages is required in order to participate.** Participants do not have to be able to express themselves philosophically in all three languages, but must be able to understand questions and comments addressed to them regardless of which of the three languages these are being phrased in.
- Talks should aim to facilitate discussion by arguing for distinctive theses while being as brief and clear as possible.
- All participants take part in the Colloquium during the whole week. It is not possible to restrict your attendance to selected days of the Colloquium.

*Call for papers:* We request proposals for presentations (maximum length: one page), along with a short CV (maximum length: two pages), by **April 1, 2013**. Please send these documents via e-mail to the following address: [evian@philosophie.fu-berlin.de](mailto:evian@philosophie.fu-berlin.de).

## LOCATION, ACCOMMODATION AND COSTS

As in the past years, the Colloquium will take place in a villa on the banks of Lake Geneva. The villa is home to the Centre Jean Foa, which is managed by the French organisation ADAPT. Both single and double rooms are available; each room has a private bathroom. Double rooms cost EUR 360,- per attendee, single rooms are EUR 490,-. This fee covers meals and accommodation for the duration of the colloquium. In some cases of special need, individual arrangements can be made.

More information about the Colloquium can be found at:  
<http://www.geisteswissenschaften.fu-berlin.de/eviancolloquium/>

Organisation: Georg W. Bertram (Berlin), Robin Celikates (Amsterdam), David Lauer (Berlin).  
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